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Bill would oust Soviets at U.S. missions

By Tom Diaz
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The State Department will have to fire more than 200 Soviet citizens at U.S. diplomatic missions in the Soviet Union if an amendment Rep. James A. Courter, R-N.J., plans to add to the State Department authorization bill passes.

The measure would give the State Department until Sept. 30, 1986, to replace Soviet employees at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the consulate in Leningrad with U.S. personnel.

"Our Foreign Service officers labor under difficult enough conditions in the Soviet Union without having to work among Soviets in the embassy and the consulate," Mr. Courter said yesterday.

"The . . . Soviets pose a needless counter-intelligence burden and an unacceptable risk to the security of our personnel and operations."

Phil Peters, an aide to Mr. Courter, said the congressmen will offer his amendment today if the \$2.8 billion State Department authorization bill is taken up on the House floor as scheduled.

Mr. Peters said Mr. Courter has talked to a number of congressmen about the amendment.

"I know of no one who opposes it," Mr. Peters said.

The move is prompted by reports — including those detailed in The Washington Times last March — that KGB operatives have infiltrated the U.S. embassy, operating under cover of sup-

port and maintenance jobs. It was revealed at the time that about a dozen embassy typewriters were bugged from 1982 to 1984.

"The Washington Times story is just about the best thing that has been done on it [the problem] so far," Mr. Peters said.

Soviets employed by the U.S. in Moscow and Leningrad are used as chauffeurs and mechanics, run canteens, and handle routine maintenance, including electrical and plumbing repairs. Until recently, they even answered embassy telephones.

Mr. Peters said the Soviets who work at the embassy are unacceptable security risks because "they can watch all the goings-on at the embassy."

"This gives people who are trained in intelligence the chance to get important information, not to mention physical access to plant 'bugs,'" he said.

Mr. Peters said representatives of the Soviet government have called Mr. Courter's office twice within the last week to ask about the progress of the amendment, but haven't offered their view on its merits.

However, he said, officials at the State Department said in staff discussions that they oppose the measure.

He said "they claim to be moving in the right direction already," by planning to reduce the number of Soviet employees, and also argue that "some Soviets" are needed "for the sake of efficiency."

But a State Department spokesman said the agency would have "no comment" on the matter.